



NUPEDIA.COM STATEMENT OF EDITORIAL POLICY

Version 3.2 (June 23, 2000)

[Printable copy.](#)

This is a statement of the policies and procedures that that editors, peer reviewers, writers, and copyeditors will be expected to follow in the production of the Nupedia encyclopedia. Everyone involved in this project is expected to be familiar with the relevant parts of the policy statement. This statement is essential to our giving the project direction, consistency, and coherence.

Note: in most browsers, you will be reading this in a new window. In that case, simply close this window when done printing. Otherwise, press the "back" button on your browser when you're finished.

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I. DEFINITIONS OF SOME KEY TERMS.

Some definitions of a few key terms will be useful in advance. Further clarification of these terms is given throughout this document.

Associated with the categories listed [here](#) are *editorial review groups* made up of a subject area editor, peer reviewers, and interested members of the public subscribed to an associated mailing list. (Information on mailing lists is [here](#))

A review group is considered to be *functioning* when the category has an editor and at least two peer reviewers. The *steering committee* of the category consists, essentially, of the first members of a functioning editorial review group.

The *subject area editor* of a category, such as Classics, is the person responsible for giving final approval to articles in the category, approving new peer reviewers in the category, and organizing discussion on new categories.

A *peer reviewer* for a category is a person officially designated as being responsible for discussing article submissions and guidelines on the review group's mailing list.

A *copyeditor* is a person charged with ensuring that articles are written with excellent grammar, spelling, punctuation, usage, and style.

The Nupedia *advisory board* or *advisory group* consists of subscribers, from among editors and peer reviewers, to a mailing list. Issues of policy are discussed and settled upon by this group. The advisory board has contributed many valuable changes and additions to this policy statement.

II. OVERVIEW OF THE EDITORIAL PROCESS.

Here is an outline of the proposed Nupedia editorial process:

The name of a topic is added to Nupedia's database by the editor-in-chief or by one of the subject editors. A writer (often, and as appropriate, an expert on the topic) asks the editor to be assigned that topic, or an editor asks someone to write on it. In any event, the topic is assigned and the writer goes to work. The resulting draft article is posted on the relevant review group (or, in some cases, groups); peer reviewers suggest revisions. When approved by the copyeditors, the writer submits the article to the topic editor, who either approves the article or sends it back for further revision. When approved by the subject editor, the article is then submitted to the copyediting group. After the article has been checked and revised for good grammar, usage, etc., the completed article is inputted into an article submission form on the website. From that the article is converted into XML format and the article is uploaded into Nupedia's database, ready for public access.

Most of the rest of this document is an elaboration of the steps involved in the above-described process.

III. GENERAL NUPEDIA POLICIES.

A. GOALS OF THE PROJECT.

Our long-term goal is to create an open content encyclopedia, usefully cross-referenced, arranged, and searchable, freely available on the web and in various other inexpensive formats, and with a greater amount of content than any encyclopedia has had in history. Also essential to our goal is that articles will be peer-reviewed and academically respectable, unbiased, translated into various non-English languages, and will offer both practical and theoretical information. The leaders of the Nupedia project recognize that this goal cannot be achieved without considerable time, effort, and ambition, as well as some humility.

Significant near-term milestones will be reached when: (1) our first article is given final approval; (2) our first article appears on the website; (3) all of our review groups are staffed; (4) at least one article from each subject area appears on the website; and (5) 1,000 articles appear on the website.

B. THE INTERNATIONAL NATURE OF THE PROJECT.

Nupedia is, by design, an international project in several senses.

First, since the project is web-based, it is amazingly easy for us to have participants from around the globe. We do, therefore, strongly encourage participation by people from all nations.

Second, though our first articles will appear in both American English and British English, we will, as soon as is practical to do so, set up a system whereby translations of Nupedia articles into many other languages are made available. Our hope and intention is to render Nupedia articles in all major world languages.

Meanwhile, we hope to avoid regionalisms, insofar as that is possible, thus making articles in American English comprehensible to British English speakers and articles in British English comprehensible to American English speakers. The very fact that this rule needs to be made testifies to the truly international nature of the undertaking, which could not have been achieved on this scale before the advent of the Internet.

Moreover, we are quite willing to accept articles written in other languages than English. Currently, all editorial functions are carried out in English, however; therefore, before an article can be considered, it should be translated into English. There are many people associated with Nupedia who are willing and able to assist with this.

Third, in virtue of our nonbias policy (see below), we hope to make it possible to bring radically divergent viewpoints together in a way that, it is to be hoped, cannot reasonably be regarded as tendentious by anyone. We believe this is absolutely essential to the establishment of an *international* institution.

C. OUR AUDIENCE.

Articles, and particularly introductory and general articles, should be readily comprehensible to nonspecialists and nonacademics generally, and all purely technical terms should be defined. General articles are to be written for an average college graduate, or for an intelligent high school graduate. Articles on technical and abstruse subjects and on current topics of debate among specialists may be fully understandable only by some people with advanced degrees in those subjects, and should always be linked to more general articles where the subject is discussed, at least briefly. Nonetheless, all Nupedia articles are meant for the consumption of educated adults and are to be written so simply, clearly, and with such liveliness that others will have relatively little trouble understanding them. This does not imply that vocabulary and sentence construction are to be simplified for the purpose of being easier for beginners such as schoolchildren to understand; Nupedia materials can, under our open content license, be adapted for them in all sorts of ways.

The responsibility for ensuring that articles are well-written for our audience falls to all our contributors -- editors, peer reviewers, proofreaders, and of course writers.

D. LACK OF BIAS.

Nupedia articles are, in terms of their content, to be unbiased. There may be respectable reference works that permit authors to take recognizable stands on controversial issues, but this is not one of them. This is, admittedly, a difficult ideal to achieve; but we feel that, where bias can be detected, it can also be eliminated.

This question is a good (albeit not infallible) test of a lack of bias: "On every issue about which there might be even minor dispute among experts on this subject, is it very difficult or impossible for the reader to determine what side the author falls on?"

This requires that, for each controversial view discussed, the author of an article (at a bare minimum) *mention* various opposing views that are taken seriously by any significant minority of experts (or concerned parties) on the subject. In longer articles, of course, opposing views will be spelled out in considerable detail. In a final version of the article, every party to the controversy in question must be able to judge that its views have been fairly presented, or as fairly as is possible in a context in which other, opposing views must also be presented as fairly as possible. Moreover, if objections to any particular views are offered (which will be an essential component to certain articles, e.g., those on philosophy and public policy), the most serious or relevant objections to other, opposing views must be offered as well. The reader should, ideally, be given the tools for deciding the issue; or, failing that, the reader should be introduced to the problems that must be solved in order to decide the issue.

On any controversial issue, it is usually important to state which views, if any, are now (or were at some time) in favor and no longer in favor (among experts or some other specified group of people). But even this information can and should be imparted in such a fashion as not to imply that the majority view is correct, or even that it has any more presumption in its

favor than is implied by the plain fact of its popularity.

To present a subject without bias, one must pay attention not just to the matters of which views and arguments are presented, but also to their wording or the tone in which they are mentioned. Nupedia articles should avoid describing controversial views, persons, events, etc., in language that can plausibly be regarded as implying some value judgment, whether positive or negative. It will suffice to state the relevant (agreed-upon) facts, to describe various divergent views about those facts, and then let readers make up their own minds about what the correct views are.

We acknowledge, however, that there will inevitably be some element of bias involved in *arranging* some articles (i.e., putting them into some order) on a web page. This task will be left to the discretion of Nupedia editors; but, as a rule, we will attempt to arrange topics on controversial views according to their popularity.

One solution to the problem of bias is to offer "articles in disagreement." While this is not our official solution -- we believe that where there is occasion for such an article, there is occasion to amend a currently existing article in some appropriate fashion -- we might at some future date include, as a separate feature, a series of such articles, or an online debate among experts.

The nonbias policy does not mean that, as a Nupedia writer, you may not, to a large extent, speak with your own voice in terms of writing style (certainly you may; and see below). Writers should avoid use of the first person, however; the third person will be expected, and if the first person is used, it will require editorial approval (it will have to be for a very good reason).

E. ACCESS TO THE DISABLED.

We affirm our commitment to make Nupedia accessible to those contributors and users who are disabled, or differently able, as fully as possible. We shall adopt whatever reasonable policies and procedures we find necessary to implement this; hence we intend Nupedia to be among the best-suited for browsing and use by the disabled. The Nupedia staff will write or re-write our HTML in such a way as to assist disabled contributors and users. Some examples:

- 1) We will use text equivalents for all images.
- 2) We will make descriptions of all video content.
- 3) We will write transcripts and/or caption all audio content.
- 4) We will include text summaries of all charts and graphs.

At the same time, we assume that some groups of disabled contributors and users do use assistive and/or adaptive technology and, thus, we see it as our goal to make our website, our procedures and policies, and our content compatible with this technology. For example, for those individuals with voice-enabled browsers, we will try to provide a navigation system for our web pages and content that compliments such browsers.

We welcome the input and advice of persons who wish to see Nupedia improved in this regard.

IV. CHOOSING ARTICLE TOPICS.

The editor of a category must approve of all topics to be assigned, or else assign this responsibility to one or more trusted specialists on particular subtopics.

Because Nupedia will be arranged in hypertext format, there is no need to solve the classic encyclopedists' dilemma, namely, the choice between writing many brief articles on specific topics or fewer long articles on general topics. We can have articles at virtually all levels of generality.

But initial topics to be created and assigned will, ideally, be general topics as well as other topics that the steering committee

believes will be, for one reason or another, in highest demand among Nupedia readers. By, in the early stages of this project, encouraging the writing articles at a relatively high level of generality, the editors and peer reviewers of the relevant categories will be forced, in a very useful way, to think about both how articles in their categories are to be arranged and what articles are needed at all.

Indeed, editors should bear in mind that the inclusion of an article in the encyclopedia might reasonably be taken to imply that other articles, of the same sort as the first, will be included as well. For example, if the Music category editor were to decide to include an article on a certain person because he was an influential patron of music, then the editor ought to be prepared to ask for articles on other influential patrons of music as well.

In deciding on whether to include some topic in Nupedia (and how precisely to word the title), some general rules that should be borne in mind:

- In a title, prefer the more common of two or more names for a thing, unless one of the less common titles is clearly more appropriate. Thus our music group may prefer to title an article about the orchestral instrument as *cello*, not *violincello*; but we may use *automobile* rather than *car* due to the ambiguity of the latter. (However, for searching purposes, all variants on names should be in the Nupedia database as alternate titles. Instructions on how writers should indicate alternate titles for articles will appear in later editions of this policy statement.)
- Ambiguous words in titles are to be disambiguated with parenthetical clarifications. Thus: *Athens (Greece)* and *Athens (Georgia, U.S.A.)*. Also: *Madonna (pop singer)* and *Madonna (Virgin Mary)*.
- Subtopics of more general topics are to be indicated without the use of commas. Thus: *history of morality*, not *morality, history of* (or *history of morals* -- that's up to our cultural historians to decide); *nineteenth-century German drama*, not *drama, nineteenth-century German*.

In an online encyclopedia, articles that are found by searching a database rather than looking an article up in an alphabetically-arranged volume, there is no need for rearranging titles in this way. (However, again, for searching purposes we may wish to include titles rearranged in different orders; we'll consult with our programmers to see whether it would be useful to do so, and post an update on this point in a later version of this policy statement.)

- Similarly, names of persons should be stated with first names first and last names last: *George Washington*; *Sir Walter Scott*; *Martin Luther King, Jr.*
- The words for things given in article titles should be the common words for the things in the language in which the article is written. Thus, for articles in English: use "Rome," not "Roma"; use "Avicenna," not "Ibn Sina." When articles are translated into other languages, titles will also be translated, of course. Also, titles in other languages may be indicated in the articles themselves and as alternate titles (as per the above discussion) -- if helpful and relevant.
- Avoid creating two topics that are, conceptually, closely related. The point here is to avoid duplication of effort. An example should help. *Ethics* is a subcategory of philosophy and will certainly be a topic (and probably a subcategory). So, perhaps, the topic *morality* should not also be created, except as part of a distinct topic such as *history of morality* or an article about the state of morality in the contemporary world. Alternatively, we might have an article explaining the meaning of 'morality' as understood by philosophers and other groups, concluding with a prominent link to the article on ethics for more in-depth exploration of morality. Topics should not be created for alternate designations for a single place, person, etc.; it's either *Cicero* or *Tully*, or perhaps even better, *Marcus Tullius Cicero*.

Editors will be sent instructions on how to enter topics into the Nupedia database (when they are available).

Associated with each topic will be a review group or groups. For many topics, of course, there will be one obvious review group responsible for overseeing the topic. Less frequently there will be topics that we will want edited by more than one group; e.g., *God* or *deity* will probably need input both from philologic-I (the philosophers and logicians) as well as religion-I. If there is any question about this, please consult with the editor-in-chief; this sort of issue should also be discussed by the Nupedia advisory group. As a rule of thumb: if within a given discipline there are experts who study the topic in considerable depth, the corresponding review group ought to have a say about the article. Generally, editors are expected to be alert to the fact that other review groups may want to have a say about certain topics that they create. In obvious cases, he or she may simply enter in both (or all) relevant groups into the *area* part of the article assignment form. In less obvious cases, he or she may wish to consult with the other area editors and the editor-in-chief.

There should be one *primary* editorial group associated with every topic in any case. In case of dispute or uncertainty, the decision as to which group this will be will be left up to the editor-in-chief. The editor of the *primary* editorial group will have final responsibility for determining who is assigned the topic.

V. ASSIGNING ARTICLES.

Nupedia topics will be assigned to writers or collaborators. Potential writers should contact the relevant category editor and ask to be assigned topics on which they wish to write (or on which they have already written an article). Moreover, editors may wish to contact known and respected writers to write articles on a given topic.

A. QUALIFICATIONS OF WRITERS.

Editors (and peer reviewers assigned this responsibility by editors) should determine, before making an assignment, that a candidate writer is adequately qualified for the job. There are some Nupedia topics on which, no doubt, very satisfactory brief articles could be written by a good writer with no special training at all, or a hobbyist's interest. A great many of the more specialized topics, and perhaps the bulk of topics overall, however, should be assigned to specialists in the relevant field. The rule of thumb an editor should bear in mind is: would an article on this topic be of significantly greater quality if it were written by an expert on the subject? If yes, we will require that the writer be an expert on the subject. If no, nonspecialists (who are good writers) are more than welcome.

Expert, however, is a notoriously ambiguous term. Just to take an example (that is not intended to bear any relation to any actual person): if a man who had received a Master's degree in French literature focusing exclusively on Victor Hugo had written a dozen or more peer-reviewed articles about Hugo, the fact that he lacks a Ph.D. should not stop us from assigning him topics related directly to Hugo. The same man, however, should probably not write the general article on nineteenth-century French literature; that job would belong to someone with a broader background. Moreover, if he wrote his articles two decades ago, has not studied or published very much since then, and there is no danger of our being unable to find a suitable Hugo expert, then we should probably not assign him the Hugo article.

In most cases we will want to assign topics to persons who have already done extensive, high-quality research (not necessarily published work, but probably, in most cases) on those topics. It obviously is not necessary, to have done extensive, high-quality research on a topic, to have any particular degree at all.

B. WHOM TO ASSIGN A TOPIC, AND WHAT TO ASSIGN WHEN.

Editors should focus first on assigning topics that they expect to be popular and in demand among encyclopedia readers. Of course, if a writer asks to be assigned an article on any topic, including *unpopular* topics, it should be assigned (provided the writer is suitable for the job, and with exceptions as noted below).

It should be helpful to assign biographies of figures associated with particular theories, movements, historical events, etc., at the same time as main articles on related subjects.

The subject area editors have broad discretion on whom they wish to assign topics. As general guidelines, however, the following should suffice.

Any qualified writer who asks to be assigned a topic should be assigned that topic, *unless* the editor wishes to reserve the topic for some special reason. Peer reviewers should be assigned nearly any topic they request; an editor would have to have a rather good reason to deny the request (e.g., the peer reviewer is not an expert in the subject, and a much-better qualified person will soon be able to write the article). Editors may reserve certain topics for themselves.

Moreover, of course, editors may wish to earmark certain topics or groups of topics for assignment to any of a number of experts not yet associated with Nupedia in any way. Editors and others may wish to solicit help from the authors of informational websites; information from such websites might be adapted for use on Nupedia (but on the topic of adapting pre-existing materials, please see below).

We hope that many of the initial articles to be assigned will be "brief, introductory articles" (this refers to a specific type of article; see below); our aim is achieve considerable breadth before adding detail.

Note well: If a "longer article" (this refers to another specific type of article; see below) is assigned, before it can be accepted, it must be accompanied by a brief, introductory article. The person or persons responsible for the introductory article on a topic need *not* be the same as the person or persons who write the longer article on that topic (again, see below). The longer article will require a separate assignment.

If a subject editor has any question, particularly on decisions that might be seen as setting important precedents, on whom should be assigned a topic, the editor should consult with the editor-in-chief.

C. HOW TO ASSIGN AN ARTICLE AND CHECK ASSIGNMENTS.

We will have a web page input form that editors can use to create topics, assign them to particular people, and set official deadlines. Instructions on the location and use of this form will be sent to editors when the instructions become available. Meanwhile, assignments will just have to be tracked by hand by individual editors.

There will be a link on the website to a page from which writers may check whether a topic has been created yet, whether it has been assigned, to whom it has been assigned, and what the deadline is. We'll let members know when this is available.

Subject area editors are officially permitted to be as strict or as lenient with deadlines as they see fit. An editor might wish to tell writers that if an article on a topic is not received by the deadline, then it may be immediately reassigned to someone else -- that would be fine. An editor might also wish to tell writers that deadlines are very flexible. Personal experience will no doubt suggest a happy medium of some sort.

VI. GENERAL NUPEDIA GUIDELINES FOR WRITING ARTICLES.

There will be two different kinds of Nupedia guidelines for writing articles: general, Nupedia-wide guidelines, and guidelines set up for specific types of articles that fall under the purview of specific review groups. Writers are expected to be familiar with and to follow all relevant requirements, and peer reviewers and editors are expected to enforce them. The following are the general, Nupedia-wide guidelines.

A. GENERAL FEATURES OF WRITTEN STYLE.

Nupedia articles will, we hope, be exemplary specimens of the languages in which they are written. In general, we desire Nupedia articles to exhibit the following qualities (among others): unimpeachable standard usage, grammar, punctuation, and spelling; clarity (i.e., being readily comprehensible by Nupedia's audience); the use of active voice and concrete language (with examples); a high degree of logical structure that is made plain to the reader; lack of bias; and a natural, lively, and even witty style. It is worth perusing Strunk and White's *Elements of Style* again as a general guide to style. Within the general constraints of good English, we want to encourage writers to be as lively, and even as humorous -- or at least good-natured -- as reasonably formal writing permits. Encyclopedia articles do not have to be written in a boring style.

B. OFFICIAL STYLE AND USAGE GUIDES.

The first language of Nupedia will be English in both its American (U.S.) and British varieties. We will, in time, try to set up our system and organize translators so that encyclopedia articles can be translated from any given language to many other

major languages; but at present, it is quite ambitious enough to hope for an English-language encyclopedia.

We will adhere to the most recent edition (the 14th) of *The Chicago Manual of Style* on questions of citation and other issues common to both American and British English. Questions of American English usage are to be answered with the help of the excellent, recently-published *Dictionary of Modern American Usage* by Bryan A. Garner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998). (The hardcover edition of the latter is fairly inexpensive and can be ordered online.) Questions of British English usage are to be answered with the help of H. W. Fowler's *Dictionary of Modern English Usage*, Second Edition, edited by Sir Ernest Gowers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965). All copyeditors will be expected to have and use the relevant references (and indeed, American copyeditors are encouraged to get a copy of Fowler); editors, peer reviewers, and writers are encouraged to use them as well. Garner's pragmatic stance toward nonsexist language will be Nupedia policy for both British and American English.

On any matters of general policy left open, unclear, in dispute, etc. by these references, please consult the editor-in-chief; generally, these matters can be left officially unresolved, i.e., left to the discretion of individual writers and/or copyeditors. Forced to make a choice, in general, we will probably prefer the more well-established of two options; we have no great desire to be linguistic innovators (or, for that matter, dusty curmudgeons). We simply want Nupedia to be written in a fashion that is most easily understood by a reasonably intelligent contemporary reader.

C. SECTION HEADINGS.

In longer articles, descriptive, straightforward headings should announce the subjects of blocks of text (a group of, just for example, five related paragraphs).

D. EXPLAINING WHY A TOPIC IS IMPORTANT.

It is one thing to impart bare facts and information, and it is another to place the facts into a context whereby the reader can understand why a person, place, species, event, concept, etc., may be regarded as important. Nupedia will differ from some other encyclopedias by consistently highlighting the latter sort of information, when relevant. Claims about inventions, achievements, revolutions, assassinations, etc., can and should be placed in a broader context to explain why they do indeed deserve our attention.

Thus, for example, in a bibliographic entry, the author should indicate *why* the actions of the entry's subject are regarded as important; it should be made clear what impact, whether good or ill, those actions have had. Another example: entries concerning inventions and discoveries should relate some hard facts that make it clear how and why the invention or discovery has impacted the world. Why *was* the cotton gin so important, anyway?

An explanation of the importance of a topic is an opportunity to entertain readers. It is also one sort of area where some care will be necessary, because, obviously, there is considerable disagreement about what are properly considered achievements, and whether the results of given acts and events have been positive or negative. So it will be important to avoid bias in explaining why certain topics are important. It may turn out that for one segment of the educated populace, a particular topic is simply not important, while for another it is extremely so, and that this difference in assessment is due to political or religious reasons, for example. In such a case it should be made clear, in as unbiased a fashion as possible, *for whom* the topic is important, and *why*.

E. HOW TO.

Philosophers distinguish between declarative knowledge, which is conveyed in the sort of declarative sentences ordinarily found in an ordinary encyclopedia, and procedural knowledge, or the knowledge of how to do things. A complete compendium of human knowledge, as an encyclopedia is supposed to be, ought to impart both kinds of knowledge insofar as mere words (and other online media) permit this. Thus, eventually, we will want articles not merely on the history of violins, the different violin makers, etc., but also on how to play the violin. Articles in the Family and Consumer Science category should explain to how to cook and clean, and give advice to families on childrearing. Articles about dogs will not merely explain the physiology and typology of our canine friends but also their care and feeding.

F. EXPLAINING JARGON.

Jargon should not be used without being explained. This might be somewhat complicated in the context of Nupedia as a whole, because, very likely, the item of jargon will have its own entry, however brief. Hence some care must be taken to ensure that the gloss given of a bit of jargon squares with any "official account" already given in Nupedia. Explanation of jargon could (and no doubt will) be handled, in the future, using special cross-references (in which clicking on or hovering the mouse over a word will cause its definition to pop up); but until some such system has been perfected, the rule will be that all jargon should be explained within an article itself. This rule can be relaxed with regard to basic jargon within very advanced/specialized material that a lay audience could not be expected to understand in any case.

G. PRONUNCIATION.

Pronunciation of non-English and uncommon words and names should be given in parentheses. Generally, if there is a substantial chance that an intelligent high school graduate or an average college graduate will not know how to pronounce a word, name, etc., then supply a simple phonetic explanation when the term first occurs. Examples: the Weimar (VY-mar) Republic; George Berkeley (BARK-ly). Perhaps our copyediting group will help establish easy-to-read standards for writing out the pronunciation of a word, or perhaps we will have someone create sound files so that the reader can hear the word spoken. For now, though, each syllable should be separated by a hyphen, the syllable receiving the main stress should be in upper case, and the spelling of the explanation should make it obvious on its face to English speakers how the word should be pronounced.

H. KEYWORDS.

As part of article submissions to Nupedia, keywords will be included for search purposes. Here the rule is: is this word a word that someone might type in hoping to find this particular article (among possibly many other articles)? If so, include that word among the keywords; if not, don't. Consequently, there need not be many keywords, but there is also no specific limit on number of keywords; if it so happens that this specific article may be of interest to people who search on thirty different words or phrases, then there might indeed be thirty different keywords. Further requirements about keywords will be provided when we know how our system will be using them.

I. BIBLIOGRAPHIES.

A bibliography will be associated with every (or nearly every) Nupedia article. Bibliographies should be compiled according to the applicable guidelines in *The Chicago Manual of Style*. The purpose of the bibliography is twofold: to give readers credible sources of introductory reading, and to make a record of the most important, influential, etc., works on the subject in question.

J. CROSS-REFERENCES AND EXTERNAL LINKS.

We can distinguish between three kinds of links that we might consider including in a Nupedia article:

1. cross-references to other Nupedia articles and resources; e.g., the article *kangaroo* will have a link to the article *marsupial*;
2. links to off-site material that is essential to understanding the text of the article; e.g., an article about a classical Roman author will feature links to websites where that author's texts can be found; and
3. links to purely supplementary material; e.g., an article on horses might have a link to a general informational website about horses.

Cross-reference links (of type (1)) will be added within the text of a new article *only* if an article on the topic in question exists. In that case, the writer, for the benefit of those who will mark the article up in XML, should enclose the text to be linked by underscores, and add the *exact* name of the article to be linked between brackets. For example:

Plato posited the existence of what are called _"Forms" or "Ideas"_ [article: Platonic Forms] (these words are sometimes capitalized and sometimes not; they are translations of the Greek "eidos," prn. \ 'ay-dohs\).

Moreover, when a new article is accepted, the writer, with the help of other Nupedia members, should compile a list of other

text mentions in other articles that should contain direct links to the new article.

The URLs for any links of type (2) *must* be specified by the authors of articles.

Links of type (3) will, for now, be left out of Nupedia articles entirely. We might (and probably will), eventually, include associated web information -- what would be, essentially, a Nupedia web directory, integrated with our own content.

K. ADAPTING PRE-EXISTING MATERIALS.

Some people have already generously offered to Nupedia the use of their materials for inclusion in Nupedia. Exactly how these materials might be adapted for Nupedia's use is to be determined by the relevant subject area editor(s), but as a general rule, we expect all materials, if even previously web-posted or published, to undergo Nupedia's entire editorial process. Any exceptions to this general rule should be proposed to the editor-in-chief.

L. GRAPHICS.

We strongly encourage everyone working on Nupedia to seek out or create high-quality (noncopyrighted) graphics of all sorts to enhance articles. So submission of graphs, diagrams, maps, pictures, etc., is strongly encouraged. Each should be accompanied by a small thumbnail (e.g., 80x80 pixels) that users will be able to click on to see the larger image. We might (or might not) formulate guidelines on the use of graphics based on what we receive.

M. ITALICS.

Words that writers would like italicized (*like this*) should enclose the words between asterisks, *like this.* This is for the benefit of those marking the articles up using XML, who will be instructed to italicize *exactly* what is between the asterisks. Hence, if a punctuation mark is between asterisks, it will be italicized; if not, it won't be.

VII. ARTICLE REQUIREMENTS.

Here are some statements about what is required for a variety of *general* types of articles. Articles will also have to fulfill some more *specific* requirements for more specific types of articles; these more specific requirements will have to be obtained from the relevant subject area editors. In the future we might have a central web location where such requirements are posted.

A. THREE TYPES OF ARTICLES.

There will be three types of Nupedia articles: (1) a definition of the topic; (2) a brief, one-to-five paragraph introduction to the topic; (3) a longer article on the topic (that might repeat some of the material found in subtopics of the topic).

For example, at the top of the music category, we will have a page containing three texts on music in general. First, we'll have a fairly brief definition -- which, admittedly, is hardly needed, as everyone knows generally what we're talking about when we use the word "music"; but it's useful for purposes of introducing the topic and giving the reader a more precise idea of what will be covered by the topic. Second, after the definition, we might have some very introductory paragraphs concerning (just for example -- this is up to our musicologists) musical instruments, styles, composers, theory, and why anyone might want to study or make (as opposed to idly listen to) music. Third, there will be a list of links to the main subtopics of music; but at the top of that list of links will be a link to a longer article about music in general. This longer article might repeat (and indeed swipe material from -- remember, this is an open content encyclopedia!) relevant introductory sections from *subtopic* articles.

B. DEFINITIONS.

The first one or two sentences of a Nupedia article should contain a definition, or concise description, of the topic. As a rule, this sentence or these sentences should be written in plain, prosy, nonfancy language rather than specialists' jargon. The purpose of this definition is to introduce and clarify the topic of the article (category, subcategory, etc.) for people who do not know, or might not be quite sure, what the topic is. It is not to state The Truth as to what the proper analysis of the concept is. (A discussion of the literature of attempts to state that particular Truth, however, would be a very suitable subtopic in many cases.) Hence there is no requirement that the definition should avoid circularity or be perfectly precise, in the way that a technical definition should. Also, citing familiar examples of items mentioned in the definition (or of things to which the defined term applies) is to be preferred, not avoided.

More exactly what is required of definitions in various subject matters is also an issue for more specific policy-setting (or case-by-case decision), on which, see below.

C. BRIEF INTRODUCTIONS.

Following and including the definition (assuming more text is appropriate, which will almost always be the case), there will be a brief, introductory article of one to five paragraphs on the topic. (Note that if the editor opts not to ask for an even longer article on the topic as well a definition and a brief introduction, then there might be, instead, a medium-length article of more than five paragraphs.) Unlike the definition, this brief introduction might contain (as appropriate), in addition to the sorts of information on the topic one might usually find in an encyclopedia, both introductory information on the importance of the topic as well as introductory practical ("how to") information.

D. LONGER ARTICLES.

In many cases, linked prominently below the brief introductory article will be a longer article on the same topic. But again, note that if the editor opts not to have, in addition to a definition and a brief introduction, a longer article on the topic, then in place of the brief introduction there might be a medium-length article that might be of more than five paragraphs. In the latter case, of course there would be no link to a longer article on the same topic.

A longer article may be of any length, but if it grows past, say, 3,000-5,000 words, then it should be truncated in some fashion, with individual parts of the article developed in more detail as subtopics; links to these subtopics should be added to the original category page below the link to the longer article.

An example should help here. Suppose I want to write an article about a priori knowledge. I begin with a definition of the concept. Then I write, probably, three paragraphs briefly outlining some leading issues surrounding the concept. Below those paragraphs is a link to a longer article about a priori knowledge. I find, however, that in supplying historical detail in the longer article, and detail about the recent literature about the topic, my article grows to well over 5,000 words.

Consulting with the relevant philosophy editor and perhaps also the relevant philosophy review group, I decide to truncate and summarize parts of my unwieldy article, and I request to create subtopics: the history of thought about a priori knowledge; current views on a priori knowledge; etc. (Precisely how the topic should be arranged, and even whether there should be a lengthy article on a priori knowledge in particular, is a matter for the philosophers to decide.) The new subtopics will have associated with them some manner of definition and brief introductory article. Many of the details about a priori knowledge that I had originally wanted to put in the longer article are now placed in the longer articles about the subtopics.

E. SOME REQUIREMENTS FOR BIOGRAPHIES.

Brief, introductory biographies should have the following information in the following order; a "definition" is unnecessary (the first few sentences will serve the same function):

Full name. (Alternate name(s) in parentheses.) Date of birth-date of death. Nationality (adjective) title (noun). (For example: American diplomat; Chinese artist; German scientist and polymath.) Primary achievements or claims to fame/notoriety in a sentence or two. Then the dates, names, and brief descriptions (as applicable and as space permits) of major works, laws, crimes, battles, reigns, etc., and, as per remarks below, some explanation of why the person's achievements are or have been regarded as important. Space permitting, a brief account of aspects of the figure's private life, e.g., where lived, who married to, employed doing what, etc.

The bulk of biographical articles should consist of discussion of the person's achievements or "claims to fame" as opposed to relatively inconsequential personal data. E.g., regarding the entry about Descartes, there should be a much higher priority placed on discussions of his dualism, rationalism, and methodological skepticism, and the impact that these views had, than on relating the tragic fashion in which he died. Of course, longer articles may be exhaustive in all respects.

Important presidents and monarchs, inventors, artists, thinkers, and other of the most influential people might merit four or five introductory paragraphs; everyone else will receive fewer.

VIII. SETTING CATEGORY-SPECIFIC GUIDELINES FOR WRITING ARTICLES.

Nupedia editorial groups will have to discuss and establish formats and guidelines for writing specific sorts of articles that are uniquely (or primarily) in their purview. For example, the biologists will have to discuss what is required for articles about different species; the historians will have to discuss what is required for articles about battles; the art historians will have to discuss what is required for articles about art styles.

It is the editor's responsibility to lead discussions on his or her review group with the aim of (1) identifying the types of articles for which there is a need for guidelines, and (2) actually setting guidelines for those article types. The editor might wish to assign the task of composing specific guidelines to particular specialists (though input should be possible from all quarters).

The editor should also take care to distinguish article types that are clearly in the review group's purview from those that are more general or global. Guidelines for the latter types of articles will be established under the direction of the editor-in-chief with the help of the advisory group, and will be posted in future versions of this policy statement.

An area editor, after consulting with the area's review group, may choose to adopt a more specialized style guide. When the specialized guide comes in conflict with *The Chicago Manual of Style* or Garner's *Dictionary*, then the latter are to outweigh the more specialized guide, with some exceptions at the area editor's discretion.

The initial articles to be assigned are to be brief, introductory articles. So, initially, there is not much point in discussing what needs to be contained in a longer article.

The area editor might wish use the occasion of the assignment of an instance of a new type of article as an excuse to discuss and formulate precise guidelines for that type of article. It is the editor's responsibility to make the resulting guidelines available to writers and peer reviewers. Nupedia's management can post copies of guidelines to the web, but the actual work of putting the guidelines into HTML is left to the editor to do or delegate. (On any given review group, we fully expect there to be at least one person who can convert simple text to HTML quite easily.)

As general advice on leading a discussion on requirements, editors should encourage discussants to think creatively about what sorts of qualities superlative articles need to have. They need not simply try to codify what a standard encyclopedia article on a subject might include (and in fact they are discouraged from doing this); Nupedia's articles can and should be much better than ordinary encyclopedia articles, in terms of clarity, depth, organization, and other qualities. (Nonetheless, it is recommended that, in formulating guidelines, steering committees review a variety of reference works.) Hence a reader should, in the end, be able to find all the information and positive qualities in a Nupedia article that can be found in articles from any other encyclopedia, and more. We can't achieve this aim without setting ambitious specific guidelines.

IX. REVIEWING AND APPROVING ARTICLES.

The process whereby articles are reviewed and approved can be described as follows. Please note that for brief articles, some of the steps here might be extremely abbreviated; that is, the process needn't be quite as long and drawn out as the text below makes it sound.

If any unsolicited articles are received, the editor should not, of course, feel obligated to accept them. The typical procedure is for articles to be assigned first.

1. At or before the time that an article is assigned, the category editor should select a Lead Reviewer (LR) for that article. The LR may be the editor, but may not be any of the authors of the article; the LR should be selected from those with the greatest expertise in the relevant area. In most cases this should be a peer reviewer; but if none of the peer reviewers have adequate expertise in an area, the editor should try to find someone from outside of Nupedia to help with this task, on an **ad hoc** basis if necessary.

The LR's Nupedia UserID should be indicated by the editor in the appropriate place in the assignment system before the article is marked as assigned.

The identity of the LR is initially to be kept hidden from the writer; also, as a rule, it's preferable to keep the writer's identity hidden from the LR, although in order to do this latter, the LR must avoid looking at the assignments page when reviewing an article. To this end, Nupedia.com will send to the LR and the writer an e-mail address that they can use in order to e-mail each other anonymously. All participants in this initial review process, so long as they wish to keep it anonymous (which, if in doubt, they should), should be careful not to include their "signature" files when using the anonymous remailer system.

2. The writer(s) send(s) the completed draft article to the LR using the anonymous remailer system. The LR then supplies initial critical remarks. This process might be iterated several times.

It is highly recommended that, at this time (or else concurrently with step (4)), the writer solicit feedback on the article from a non-Nupedia mailing list that specializes in the subject matter of the article. If appropriate, the writer should ask permission from the list owner or moderator before making such a post.

It is possible that, at some stage of this process (including the beginning), it will become clear to the LR and/or the editor that the submitted article is simply unacceptable. In that case, the editor should, with the LR's help, send a brief rejection note, but one that is as tactful and sensitive as possible, to the writer.

3. Only when the LR believes that the draft article is nearly satisfactory for inclusion in Nupedia is the article posted to the relevant review group(s). The LR should consult the article checklist (below) in making this determination. The LR need not believe the article as it stands is flawless, but it must be clear to the LR that a version of the article fairly close to the present version will, probably, be acceptable. At that stage, the LR might be introduced to the author(s). Both the article's author(s) and the LR are allowed to post the article; and the decision will be left up to them as to who will post it to the relevant review group(s). The subject line of an e-mail containing an article to be reviewed should be in this format:
 REVIEW: [title of article].

4. The LR should lead a discussion of the article. In the discussion, politeness, helpfulness, and good nature is to be encouraged and is expected. "Leading a discussion" might include: posting some brief general criticisms and questions to get things started; finding two peer reviewers to comment on the article (if two of them do not simply post comments); posing specific questions to specific review group members; asking someone to check the facts in an article against a particular source; responding to questions; etc. Peer reviewers are asked to consult the article checklist (below) to determine the acceptability of the article. As needed, the writer(s) might be asked to provide revisions, and, when available, the revised version is then the subject of discussion. Essentially, the LR shepherds the article through the public review process.

Hopefully, the initial criticisms offered at stage (2) will obviate the need for much discussion, but of course that will not always be the case.

5. When the LR gets the sense that the article has been hammered into proper shape (or if it arrived in perfect condition), approval of two peer reviewers is solicited (in case the LR is the editor), or of one peer reviewer and the editor. Alternatively, peer reviewers who agree that a posted article version is acceptable might simply say so. At that time, however, other peer reviewers might wish to make it clear that that particular article version is not acceptable (for specific, enumerated reasons). When approval of the editor and two peer reviewers (the LR is among these three persons) is achieved, and there is not more than one person who believes the article is unacceptable, the article may be sent to the copyeditors. A failure to gain approval results in the article being sent back to the writer for a rewrite; failing an acceptable rewrite within an editor-established time limit, the article is rejected.

If an article must be submitted to more than one review group, it must be approved by *all* of the review groups to which it has been submitted, before it can be sent to the copyeditors. The writer or LR may submit the article to all relevant review groups at the same time or serially. The LR ensures that it has indeed passed all relevant review groups.

X. PEER REVIEW CHECKLIST.

The peer reviewers and editor have the responsibility of ensuring that an article satisfies, to an acceptable degree, the items on the following checklist; peer reviewers are expected to be quite familiar with the Nupedia Statement of Editorial Policy in order to do ensure this. Here is the checklist:

1. There does not already exist an article on this topic. If there is one, or if there is an article on a closely related topic, steps should be taken to ensure that there is no substantial or needless overlap of subject matter (though some overlap is of course permissible), and appropriate links between the articles should be worked out; e.g., one might be a subtopic of the another. This sort of thing is probably best worked out in discussion in advance of assigning any topics in a given area.
2. The article is submitted to all relevant review groups, on which, see [Part IV](#) of the policy statement.
3. The article is specified in advance as a brief article (for which a longer article might, at some point, be written), a medium-sized article (for which no longer article is intended), or a longer article (for which a brief, accompanying article already exists or is also being written). Longer articles *must* be accompanied by introductory one-to-five paragraph articles. On all this, see [Part VII](#).
4. Brief, introductory articles are kept to an appropriate length. Five-paragraph articles are appropriate only for the most important and most general topics; one-paragraph articles are appropriate for many topics, including relatively obscure figures in a field, recherche jargon, etc. The length of brief articles should, on most topics, fall somewhere in between the extremes. In-depth exposition is to be reserved for longer articles.
5. The [other rules](#) regarding naming articles are followed.
6. Biographies follow the general format found in section E, of [Part VII](#).
7. The article follows [category-specific guidelines](#) for articles of the type.

8. The article is written "for an average college graduate, or for an intelligent high school graduate," as per Section B of [Part III](#). Technical terms are explained or links to explanations are provided. Articles that cover topics that would be comprehensible only by persons with special knowledge of the subject are permitted to include unexplained jargon, so long as it is readily comprehensible by their intended audience.
9. The article is written well enough as not to require large amounts of rewriting by copyeditors. See [Part VI](#).
10. The article is as unbiased as can be expected (according to the Nupedia policy on nonbias; see section C of [Part III](#)).
11. Longer articles have appropriately descriptive section headings.
12. Unless the article is brief, it should contain some indication as to why the topic should be regarded important -- worthwhile to study or pursue. See part D of [Part VI](#) for elaboration.
13. The pronunciation of non-English and uncommon words and names are given in parentheses according to the standard found in Section G of [Part VI](#).
14. Appropriate keywords are supplied. See Section H of [Part VI](#).
15. Any desired cross-references (i.e., links to other Nupedia articles *whether they exist yet or not*) are indicated. Others might be placed in the article by those who mark an article up in XML.
16. Any relevant, noncopyrighted (or donated) graphics and sound files are properly captioned.
17. Useful bibliographies (and discographies, if relevant) are attached to all but selected brief articles (at the editor's discretion); see section I of [Part VI](#) for details.
18. Finally, the article is not plagiarized. Peer reviewers are asked to keep some common reference works on hand and to check submitted articles against them and to ensure that the article is not plagiarized. At the same time, the peer reviewer might glean some useful ways to improve the article by comparing it with other, similar articles.

XI. Copyediting procedure and policy.

The members of copyedit-1 will check those articles that have been approved by all relevant review groups for proper spelling, punctuation, grammar, usage, and (to some degree) style. The copyediting procedure and policy will be as follows.

1. The author or authors of an article post(s) a message on copyedit-1 soliciting help from copyeditors; the message should state what the subject and length of the article is, but should not contain the text of the article itself. If no one has responded after a day, the solicitation should be repeated. Copyeditors should volunteer to copyedit an article only if they are not experts on the subject of the article, unless the article is particularly technical. Copyeditors are, in any case, expected to be able to *understand* what they are copyediting. They should send along brief biographical information to help the writer make a decision.
2. The author chooses two people, from among those who respond, as the first and second copyeditors. The author is expected to choose people who are not experts on the material in question, unless the article is particularly technical. Copyeditors are, in any case, expected to be able to *understand* what they are copyediting.
3. The article is sent to the first copyeditor, who copyedits the article (in accordance with the rules below) and sends suggestions for changes back to the author. After the author makes all required changes to the satisfaction of the first

copyeditor, the author sends the article to the second copyeditor, and the process is repeated. If at any point in this process, the author has *reasoned* disagreements with something the copyeditor requires, the article can be passed provisionally (rather than unconditionally). That is, the copyeditor asserts that after the controversial issue in question has been discussed publicly (see below), he or she might still refuse to give final approval the article. As a rule, copyeditors should always permit provisional passes so long as the author's disagreement is indeed reasoned.

We will, initially at least, not establish any standard copyediting software. Copyeditors and writers may choose e-mail, word processing documents attached to e-mail, or even online chat and "instant messaging." This is a matter to be decided by copyeditors and writers individually.

4. When the second copyeditor believes the article to be satisfactory, it is posted on copyedit-l for any further comment from other listmembers. At that time, points of disagreement between first and second copyeditors and writers should be explained and debated by all parties to the dispute (with disagreements that are not resolved by debate to be decided by the editor-in-chief). Members of copyedit-l may wish to debate some of the proposed changes. They may either e-mail their comments to the author and two lead copyeditors or post their comments publicly on copyedit-l. The two copyeditors may then, if they wish, require the author to make some of the changes that copyedit-l members suggest. When that has been done, the article will be considered approved by the group.
5. If, in the opinion of the two copyeditors, an article has undergone significant revision, particularly in content, it must be sent back to the review groups for final approval before it can be included in the encyclopedia. Otherwise, it is sent to the appropriate address (to be determined) for inclusion in encyclopedia.

What follow are some general rules that all copyeditors are expected to follow in commenting on articles:

1. In general, the copyeditor sees to it that the article exhibits the following qualities: "unimpeachable usage, grammar, punctuation, and spelling; clarity (i.e., being readily comprehensible by Nupedia's audience); the use of active voice and concrete language (with examples); a high degree of logical structure that is made plain to the reader; lack of bias; and a natural, lively, and even witty style. It is worth perusing Strunk and White's *Elements of Style* again as a general guide to style. Within the general constraints of good English, we want to encourage writers to be as lively, and even as humorous -- or at least good-natured -- as reasonably formal writing permits. Encyclopedia articles do not have to be written in a boring style." (This is from [Part IV](#) at A.)
2. Determining the acceptability of the *content* of the article is not the copyeditors' responsibility. Any recommendations along those lines are acceptable, and if the writer makes any significant changes, they should be confirmed by the review group(s) again.
3. The article is copyedited for conformity with the *Chicago Manual of Style* as well as either Garner or Fowler, and Nupedia policy generally, while maintaining the individual author's writing style to the greatest extent possible. See [Part IV](#) at B.
4. The copyeditor is charged with detecting technical, "in-group" jargon that requires explanation, cross-references, or rewriting into "plain English." Similarly, regionalisms are to be avoided. This rule may be bent for particularly technical and specialized articles of the sort the simply demand the use of technical jargon.

Other Topics to Be Covered in Later Editions

Recruiting new Nupedia members

Selecting new peer reviewers and subcategory editors

Creating new editorial groups

Creating subject subcategories

Translations of Nupedia articles from English into other languages (Eventually -- perhaps soon -- we will have a system in place in which we can accept translations of articles.)

Reader feedback (We are also going to set up a system whereby readers may easily give feedback to editors and writers on specific articles.)

Revising articles

Resolving disputes

Conclusion:

In a very real sense, Nupedia will be a worldwide community effort. In the spirit of Linux and the Open Directory Project, we want to set up the mechanisms whereby thousands of people can work together in a massive undertaking toward a common, extremely ambitious goal. Indeed, Nupedia has the potential to become the finest general research resource the world has ever seen: the largest, most detailed, exhaustively edited, dynamic, widely translated, and unbiased encyclopedia in the history of the world. We feel this is a very worthy ambition.